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Ain't I a Woman?

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all the unexplored caverns call me
i know what i want
& it's not here, it's not
what i've ever had
they tell me it doesn't exist
but they lie about everything.

Donna Brogan
431 Ridgefield Road
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514
27240
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8¢

PAINFUL TIMES

Throughout the last year, people have been working hard at all sorts of productive work, general political analysis, support groups for gay women, child care, abortion, self-defense. Feminist publications are flourishing and women's living collectives and community centers have been growing in number. In spite of all of our accomplishments, many women have gone through some of the most difficult emotional struggles we've ever encountered, including the hassles we had in male-run politics and old personal relationships. In thinking back to the time when we were excitedly making plans for our new life styles and political activities it seems incredibly naive not to have been more realistic about anticipating hassles.

In planning our work groups and living collectives we invisioned an environment relatively free from oppressive relationships, (old left semantic arguments and other things that retard (or make impossible) our struggle for radical change. Instead we found other problems -- gay women feeling oppressed by straight women, heterosexual and bi-sexual women feeling rejected by gay women, hostility between women of different classes, women with children feeling they have no place at all in women's liberation, charges of racism, painfully standing in the middle of two sisters you love who are fighting and feeling both of them are right (or wrong).

I've begun to think over some of the mistakes we made that have caused so many painful experiences. The only thing I'm sure about is that we were much too idealistic. We expected far too much from ourselves and our sisters in terms of how much we could change. We were unaware of how tight a grasp this society has on us. We were wrong in assuming we could all become perfect "post-revolutionary people" even before we've decided just what that might involve. We had such high expectations that every hurt and disappointment and failure was multiplied several times over.

We must be careful not to give our sisters and ourselves false hopes of utopia in a feminist movement. We thought that because we are all women sharing the same oppression we could be easily united, that we were free from the pain we had felt before we came together. But that is not the way it is. (I still feel that as women with a Feminist consciousness, we have the potential and the responsibility to build a revolution.) We have run into some errors in our preconceptions about women working together. We assumed that because we were all females everything would work out well. Often, with that assumption in mind, we took less care in dealing with our sisters than we should have. People were hurt along the way. We were frustrated when we spoke with women whose politics were far from ours. Are "liberal" women our sisters or will they definitely be our enemies? Where do we draw the line? There may be a time when pacifism is definitely counter-revolutionary if it isn't already. Yet there are many female pacifists in the women's movement. We were angry when women from different lifestyles and with different experiences didn't understand us. We started women's collectives to live, to do political analysis together and to show other women (and ourselves) that it was possible to exist outside of marriage, the nuclear family or completely alone. Then we started becoming out of touch from and resented by women in other situations. The tension has grown to be unbearably great between many groups of women.

I don't know that we can exist in splintered resentful factions. Yet, I know we will never progress if we hesitate or avoid speaking out against the politics of women we believe are wrong. There are a few things I believe are important to do now in order not to destroy the beginnings we have. I think people should continue working in support groups. Gay women should continue meeting together. People into child care should work to keep things together. Women into building and creating a women's culture (literature, lifestyles, art, music, etc.) should keep working. These types of work and rap groups and others are important for political development, support, and often survival. In addition, we have got to begin talking and listening to women in every situation. We have to try to make these discussions as open, yet as un-threatening as possible. We have to do more consciousness raising about class, race, marriage, gay women, children, education, money -- everything that has been an underlying or obvious cause for our hassles. We haven't yet got the "perfect analysis". I think we have got to do alot more talking, listening and thinking before we choose our sides. I just hope we still have the energy to do it.

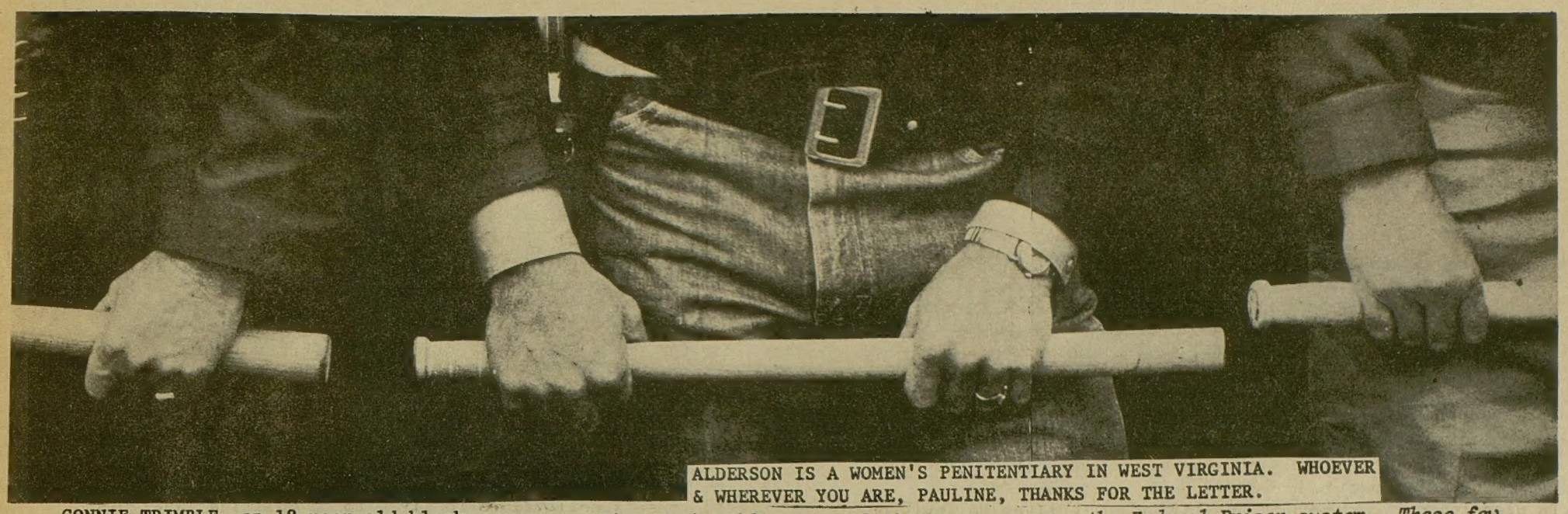
"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place ...
And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me...
And ain't I a women? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well...
And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard...
And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.

Your breath
begins
a greening in me,
and a small leaf
opens
in the secret center of my hand.

COPIES OF THE POSTER ABOVE ARE AVAILABLE FOR $1.50 & A SELF ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE FROM:

THE WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE
BOX 7193 POWDERHORN STATION
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. 55407



ALDERSON IS A WOMEN'S PENITENTIARY IN WEST VIRGINIA. WHOEVER & WHEREVER YOU ARE, PAULINE, THANKS FOR THE LETTER.

CONNIE TRIMBLE, an 18-year old black woman, is being held in Ramsey County jail in St. Paul on charges of murdering a St. Paul policeman last year. The police and court authorities treatment of Connie is typical of the treatment given to all female and black prisoners. The bail, set at $50,000 insures that she will remain in jail. This means that she is not allowed to visit with her fifteen-month old child. At her pre-trial hearing, when her mother came into the courtroom with the baby, Connie cried and asked to hold him. The court refused.

Despite the seriousness of the charges, the evidence presented by the prosecution in pretrial hearings is very questionable. Their main pieces of evidence are two voice prints they are trying to match up. Voice prints are very unreliable. One person's voice can make two different prints and two people's voices can make similar prints.

The print of Connie's voice was obtained in a typically sneaky way. At the request of the St. Paul police, Connie's welfare worker called her into his office saying he needed more information to decide on her welfare status. While there, Carolyn Bailey, a policewoman posing as a welfare statistician called to talk to Connie and made several tapes of her voice. By helping the police in this trickery, the welfare department showed its true face.

The crime of Connie Trimble is that she stepped out of her role. Connie is a black woman who has engaged in political activity in her community, something women are not supposed to understand and blacks are not supposed to do.

An appeal sent by the Women's Action Committee, Box 7193 Powderhorn Station, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55407 says:

"We know that the St. Paul Police Department was under tremendous pressure to make arrests in connection with this case. Their target was a group of people working for human liberation. Prior to her imprisonment, Constance Trimble worked with a group of young blacks in St. Paul doing community organizing, the Inner City Youth League (ICYL). In recent months, the St. Paul Police Dept. has moved to frame other members of this same group. Ronald Reed, arrested for conspiracy to kidnap the governor of Minnesota and hijack a plane (these charges were later dropped), and Gary Hogan arrested for bombing Dayton's in St. Paul, were also members of the ICYL. It is no coincidence that the charges should be similar to those being brought against others in other parts of the country.

Women are attempting to help Connie by raising money for her defense and support for her in court. Expert witnesses in linguistics, ballistics, etc.--services which are automatically available to the prosecution--must be paid for. Collateral and money for bail are needed. Women are encouraged to come to the trial.

There is a poster on sale to raise funds for Connie Trimble. See page 2.

Sisters in Alderson, and sisters around the world, this is Pauline Collins speaking. I am now what our decadent system of prison would call a fugitive. I will not dignify this by the term "fugitive from justice." As things stand now there is no justice for Black sisters in this country. Actually, I was "liberated" from Alderson by revolutionary forces.

This country is still holding fast to the "master-slave" syndrome in the treatment of its people. To quote a very fine person who happens to be locked up for his beliefs, "The mark of inhuman treatment of humans in the mark of the beast," whether it's insignia is political procrastination or judicial double talk.

I could have stayed in prison, but I know I could never be free in a society such as this. The same uptight living conditions, rotten courts, different strokes. Women are pretty far down in their scheme. Black women even farther. And a Black woman convict or ex-convict at the very bottom..The "beast mark is shown through economic enslavement, social prejudices, barbaric prison system (And take it from me three hots and a cot don't make for a human prison system); whether it's outright murder of young intellectuals and students for no other reason than their political beliefs, this is still "the mark of the beast." Whether it be continued perpetuation of ghettoes and what they breed, rationalization of police brutality, antiquated criminal and corrections system for the Blacks and Puerto Ricans and poor in our courts, while there is the extension of fast and liberal treatment to the white collar criminal "the mark of the beast is still there."

The beast tries to be cunning in his propaganda, too. Dig the following: In New York City recently it was revealed that the system was paying for a welfare family to live in a vermin infested hotel to the tune of what would have been 54,000 dollars at the end of a year. This, rather than use the same amount of money to make several of these families self sufficient, maybe. Their plan depends on keeping you in your place, you see.

Nixon states that he would raise the poverty standards, while at the same time Reagan is cutting welfare checks. Medicare and Medicaid take a cut while Appollo 14 zooms to the moon. They now want to make John Connally secretary of the treasury, a man who obviously can't keep his own financial affairs straight.

They claim inflation is tied to defense cuts. This so they can attempt to show that when you make illegal wars and keep them going it boosts the economy. Then they have to name a panel, get this, to find jobs for the veterans of that war. Of course, some of them won't need jobs. A lot of our Black brothers won't. They are usually up front on the firing lines over there; the only time as a matter of fact we have ever been up front for anything.

Let me tell you how the beast leaves his stamp on 800 sisters in Amerika in the Federal-Prison system...These few forgotten souls, (and they are just that, souls I know, I lived with them and many are pure soul) have the mark of the beast on their minds and bodies forever. Make no mistake, the structure has no intention of giving up any of that power, willingly.

For those few who may not know it, there is a movement, a revolution going on right now to do something about this medieval system.

There is a group near each person listening to my voice. You have merely to look around. We do not play chiefs and peasants or any of the games of the system. We work side by side to help each other.

Naturally my primary interest is Black Sisters. We are the most downtrodden, oppressed of all. The bottom of the heap in their weird priorities. Now that we stand up and refuse to pay any more dues, don't think the beast isn't frightened. Why do you think they are trying to get Angela? They have always known that if and when we realized our potential, they were in trouble, bad! It is a known fact that the beast has a fear of coalitions of oppressed groups; but you can imagine how he feels about such a coalition with one of the most potent ingredients imaginable, the Black Woman.

I can't stand behind a brother in this revolution, but I will stand beside one; and everytime he fires on the beast, I'll fire. I will stand beside a sister when I know she's "aware." If a sister who hasn't suffered at the hands of this monster can do battle, can I do any less? And believe me, "If I cannot bend the higher powers, I'll shake the lower roots!"

I'm sure you already know these things are true but just knowing they exist is not enough anymore. Now you have to stand up and be counted, and you have to act... Sisters, when you salute and say power remember that these are not empty phrases. There is power at the roots. Then too, the fist would not be necessary if this sick, psychotic dying excuse for a nation had not started it all in the first place.

I feel absloutely no pity for what is happening to this republic. If the powers currently operating are not scared and running by now, they should be, because it's late, very late.

In closing I would like to say: the underground already realizes what hour this is. They understand: they dig their strength which is beautiful. They have given me love, help, and care, and an inside view of togetherness. They operate efficiently and intelligently, and I am a living witness to this.

When woman is beaten and pounded and scarred for any length of time, sometimes this has the effect of a chisel on rock and the shape that emerges is beautiful in form and strength, though the sculptor may have intended to create an animal.

Pauline Collins

the powerlessness and hopelessness

I am consumed with guilt
for everything
we decided was good
that I couldn't be
I am consumed with guilt
for everything that
I've demanded
that could not be given
I cannot be all of what
I believe
and for this will
live the role of hypocrite
knowing I am, have been,
and always will be only
skitzophrenic
Neither side of myself
has ever been a lie

Everywhere my eyes see
only decadence
I could be accused
of self-righteousness
or limited vision
but my self-righteousness
is the only pat my
shoulder receives
and my vision is limited
by your privilege

Everything you say says
you don't need real change
you just think it's academically sensible
or it fills your
sense of moral obligation
but you couldn't have
the analysis you spout
and talk so peripherally
and not want to die a little

Everytime my insides feel
aloneness
I could be wrong in judging
you
or nearsighted in my vision
but your ugliness makes
your vision unbelievable
and my need makes me
feel again that I could
kill in battle those I love

the powerlessness and hopelessness
I feel
when I feel this love--
the hopeless desire
to act on
that feeling
which can't be done
to act individually in
a relationship which
involves two people or
should but doesn't
isn't
isn't
doesn't exist like
the ability to act
on being productive
can't exist without
a product to produce
or tools to produce it
or if produced and
torn
away from you

Or, just to
want to live--even
and knowing you
cannot act on that
desire
they can
those who can use
your labor and allow
you to eat if
they feel
in that mood
And if they do
they still invade
somewhere
and wanting to act so desperately
you can strike
but you don't have
to eat
and they always knew that
that you could die
but that you couldn't
win
unless you won
to begin with

And then you
can understand
once and for all
the dialectics
of how things happen
or should
but don't
won't
The powerlessness and hopelessness
I feel
when I feel this----

dialogue

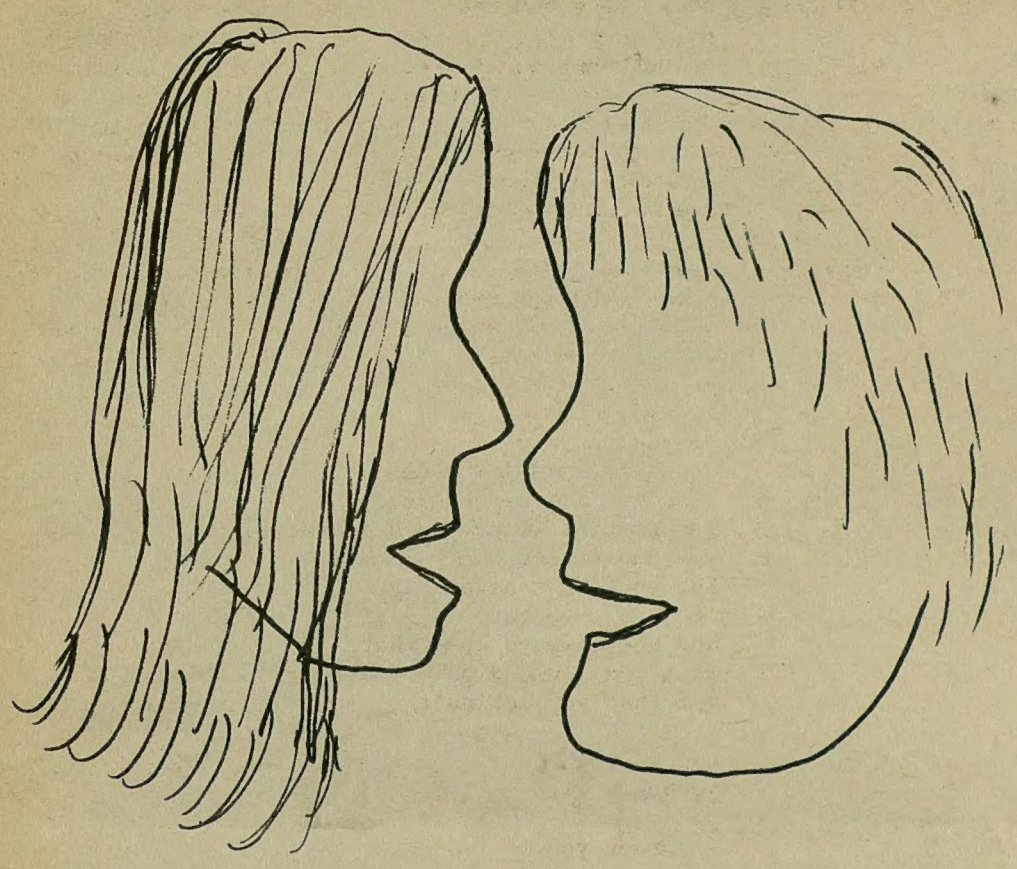
In Iowa City there is a Women's Liberation Front and everyone knows it, and most everyone knows we have an office and a phone. So what happens is that women call or write the office for a speaker to come and tell them what Women's Liberation is. The only message that I've perceived anyone getting from this practice is that Women's Liberation is an organization that we belong to and they do not. That it is something you pay dues to and attend meetings of, and that women who don't have enough time to attend the meetings aren't in it.

On just one such speaking trip to S.E. Jr. High in Iowa City, I met some women teachers whose bridge group had evolved into a consciousness raising group. I returned several times to speak to other classes and each time stayed longer in the teacher's lounge talking with those teachers. Even after we became friends, they would refer to me and the collective I live in as Women's Liberation--never conceiving of their rap group as such.

But Women's Liberation isn't a national organization with chapters and dues and membership cards. Women's Liberation is where you find it. Wherever women have realized or accepted and are struggling to attain the loose set of goals or demands that would meet the minimal needs of all women. Women organizing day care; gay women getting together to talk about and do something about their oppression; women organizing around their particular job: secretaries, teachers, high school women, housewives, waitresses, etc; women doing consciousness raising about their lives, their privileges, their racism and homosexism.

The media is a great deal to blame for creating a stereotype of a "liberated woman" that sets these women apart from other women. The image of a liberated woman is of a bra-less, well-endowed, middle class, naive looking woman, shouting obscenities as she snips the long hair of every woman she meets whether they want a hair cut or not. This is an intimidating picture, but I do not intimidate women in this way. It is, if I do, a much deeper intimidation than snipping hair-- it is the challenge of my life-style--unmarried and gay. Recently a married friend of mine came to our collective for dinner and after having a little wine admitted to being very apprehensive about how we would accept her--because she was married. I accept her and love her completely, but that was not the acceptance she wanted. She wanted acceptance of her marriage and her husband as an exceptional male. That I would not accept something that I saw causing her pain was intimidating. That I can do nothing about. I would like to make her life more comfortable, but there is only one way to make a married woman's life liveable.

There maybe another way in which women who are overtly in Women's Liberation intimidate other women. That is by acting to correct things that other women realize are wrong, but are doing nothing about. This too is a necessary challenge. The liberation of all women will not occur by women merely realizing their oppression. Power is never given; it is taken away.



I know what you mean, the exclusiveness of WL organizations or at least exclusiveness in the terms of those women who feel excluded -- not a part, for whatever reasons -- from the organizations in their towns. I don't know what the reason really is for this sort of in-out thing between women who all have been raising their consciousness about being women. I think women not in local organizations (and maybe some of us that are) sometimes see the organization as having very set ideas, a very tight ideology. Maybe we always think that about any group we're not a part of. The groups we are in we more accurately see as composed of people who grow and change.

The stereotype of the "liberated women" I would call more of a myth. The silliness of having to be liberated to join a fight for liberation. And the sadness of a new standard to live up to - of women being embarassed or defensive with other women about problems in their lives that come from the gut of being female in this world.

It's so easy to say we are all women and WL is where you find it but things don't seem to happen that way. We are all so divided from each other not even considering political lines, but by our views of everything being molded by the situations we are in. The acceptance your married friend wanted was an affirmation of her life situation perhaps and none of us seem to be able to view ourselves outside of the confines of our lives. Being gay in this society has to cause some pain (understated) and relating to people at all can be painful for that matter. However gay women want that situation they live in affirmed as good - accepted. Since we find our minds and identities so molded by the lives we must live to have chunks of our lives despised can be such a tremendous self-denial. I hope you realize I am not arguing right or wrong - we both agree marriage ain't such a hot deal but part of its horror (I think) is the difficulty for some of getting out of it (and the impossibility for others). Anyway, it's pretty depressing that the affirmation of one life style seems to deny the other. But that seems to be how it goes and I can't begin to think in terms of whether that's good or bad, just that I feel really bad that it is so difficult to relate to women living very differently from ourselves. For probably many complex reasons which I can't get together when I relate to some married women (something which I was once) they feel put down or feel I'm putting them down or vice versa. Well it's all pretty painful and I don't know how we all can come together on some kind of common ground to fight for common goals and/or if this means that women living lives outside that common ground will be left alone, isolated, pained.

I agree, my married friend wanted acceptance of her life situation as does everyone, but who was it that she wanted the approval from? It wasn't societal approval she was after for she already has that--as the gay woman does not. She wanted the acceptance of Women's Liberation, a movement which openly states that the institution of marriage is oppressive to women and should be abolished. She wanted resolution of the conflict within her: that here were women whom she liked and respected saying something that she had just begun to perceive as true about her marriage, but that what we were saying and what she was perceiving was too painful and disruptive to face. What she wanted was an understanding of all the forces controling her and respect from us that she was facing and dealing with as much as she could as quickly as she could.

You and I have come from opposite ends to meet at the middle of this question. You were married and have since attained gay consciousness. I have been gay for a long time and because of that and the way our society is structured, never until this year had *any close friends that were married. You have seen the reaction of* married women to your departure from them; I have seen the reaction of my married friends of my coming nearer to them. The polarity of our experience colors the way we see the relationship between gay and married women.

I have often heard you say that since you moved into the living collective some married women in Women's Liberation have related to you differently, that you have trouble relating to these women because of a hostility you feel from them, that they envy and resent you for being out of a situation they themselves would like to be free of. So I can see how you feel the two life styles irrevocably cut off from each other.

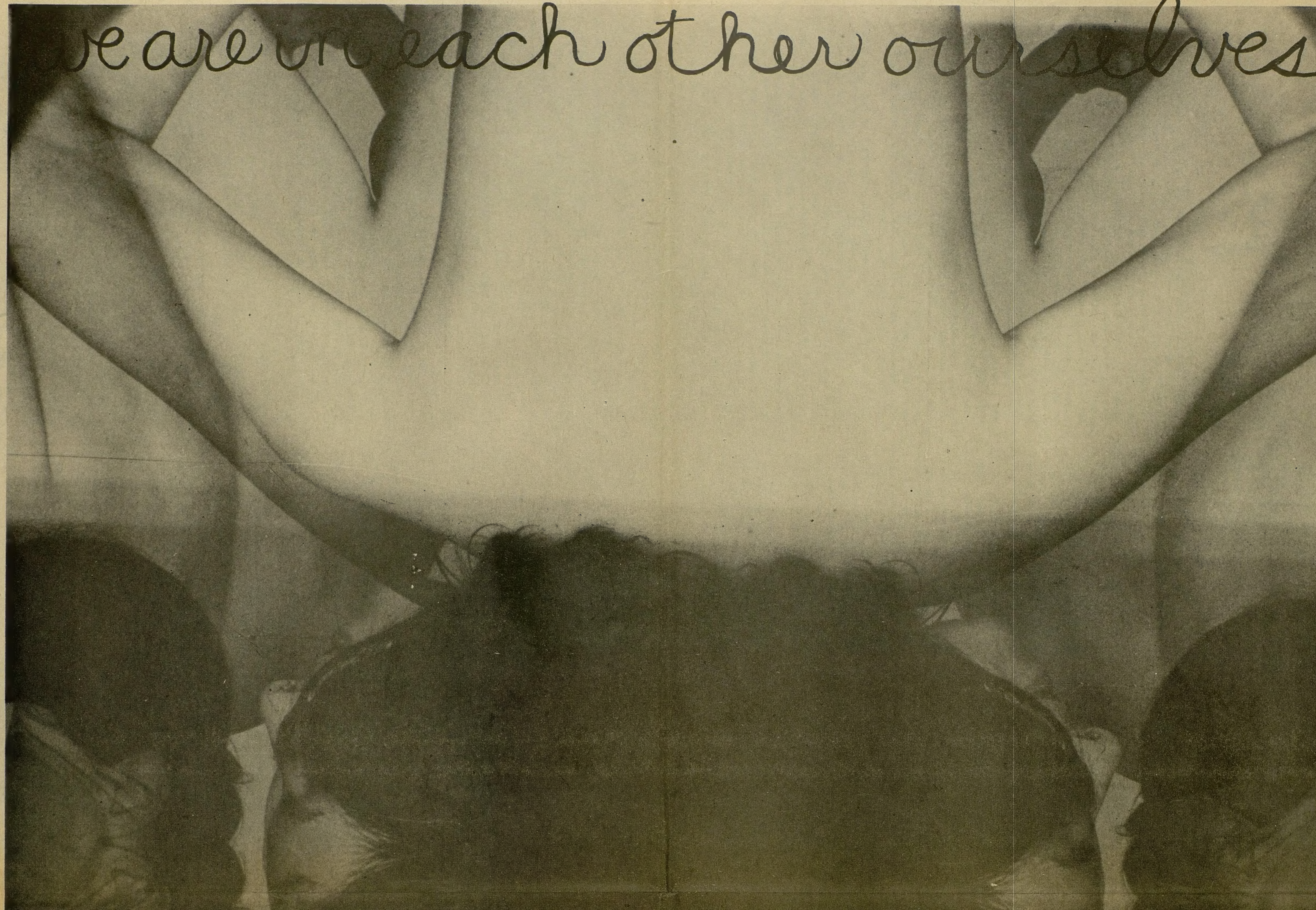
I, on the other hand, for the first time in my life have friends that are married, and ironically, it was Women's Liberation which brought us into proximity. My friendships have progressed into closeness and I've learned of the daily pain of being married. It is so different from when I first got into Women's Liberation and decided very objectively that I should raise my consciousness about marriage so I could explain the end to the institution of marriage demand when I spoke. Now we are so close that I see the sorrow around her eyes and feel her pain in my own stomach.

It was very important to me as a gay woman to hear women talking honestly about marriage and sex with men--it allowed me to see the psychiatrist's promises in the light of reality.

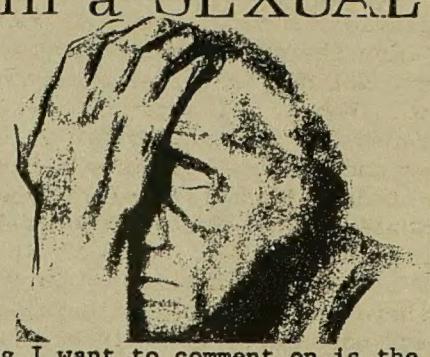
My perception is that my married friends are coming to an understanding of what it is like to love a woman and I now comprehend the forces acting upon a woman in marriage making it so difficult or impossible for her to change her situation.

I know you will say, "Then why did you write in the last issue of AIAW in your reaction to Woman identified Woman, that married women are hypocrites if they are in Women's Liberation and not gay or a least dealing with it?" And as I expressed to you and the married women in AIAW, I am so sorry I used the word hypocrite lightly. I was being simplistic and talking in absolutes. I should have gone deeper into my thoughts and expressed the compassion I feel for the contradictions married women who are in Women's Liberation must feel.

I guess I do feel the two life styles irrevocably cut off from each other. I don't want that to be the case, you know. And you may be right that seeing things that way comes from my experiences which have not been good and you see things differently cause your experiences at least recently have been. Still it seems we focus on one life style or the other and haven't been able to deal with the totality of women's experience. Ironic that this dialogue is between the two of us who, coming from different experiences, still landed in the same place. I realize even working separately women with different life styles and perspectives can be both considered women's liberation, but I can't see any group coming up with the right answers. The answers we need that can speak to the totality of the female experience must be some kind of fusing. It is that that I am doubtful about or perhaps just impatient.


we are in each other ourselves

"the BASIC female truth, that women are oppressed and subjugated via the patrilinear family in a SEXUAL manner as economic SLAVES..."



Dear Sisters,

Your issue of August 21, 1970 was sent to me here in England about last September. I read it with great interest and attention. I found it most congenial and enlightening. It does my heart good to know so many sisters are into this thing now. I have spent decades trying to think it through, having gone through hell without benefit of enlightenment, learning from errors and developing ideas under my own steam. I am now seriously considering expanding my ideas into a book with abundantly available documentation.

I was brought up on and first came to the Woman Question (the name alone is enuf to put you off) on Engels' premise that the solution is to bring women back into public industry. Yes, yes. I nodded my full agreement and espoused The Cause - without ever really going into it deeply. I see that NOW; it came to me recently. After six years of living in Ghana, I have now spent 3+ in England. Believe me, travel like this - living in various places - does wonders for your views of Reality. For instance, in England, there are unions which gladly campaign for Equal Pay for Equal Work, and employers who pretend to be - maybe ARE - willing to grant it. Will such a victory even TOUCH this "Woman Question"? Bull roar. Everything will be worse than before because the men could then say, "Whaddya yellin' fer? Ya GOT equal pay, aincha?"

Without going into how I got there, I have arrived at the point where I see that the CORE of this Woman Question is that woman's MAIN FUNCTION IN SOCIETY is the production and reproduction of labour power FOR NO WAGES. This thing that Karl Marx said about the man's wages covering his own AND the family's subsistence covers up HOW the woman is exploited. What is covered up is that women are in fact a CLASS of economic slaves producing the BASIC commodity of the system, labour power, as the chattels of individual MEN - whose names they bear in proof thereof. The METHOD by which this slavery is perpetuated is the patrilinear family, whether monogamous (which in reality it is NOT anywhere in the world, except perhaps legally) or polygamous.

If this is so, then the focal point of ATTACK for women in busting up female slavery must be the patrilinear family, the individual care of children, etc. But, of course, it then comes out that if you do this under capitalism not even WOMEN will be with you except for a far-out minority, because women's slavery is the oldest in existence and the most accepted of any form of super-exploitation, including by its victims. So women must ALSO fight to overthrow the whole system of imperialism (WHAT capitalism? My word above is WRONG) which is BASED on the nuclear patrilinear family. This brings up the relations between Women's Liberation and the rest of the Movement which is, as noted, very much in men's hands. But for women, the central contradiction is, unfortunately, the one that sets her at present against men. As males. Everything has to be worked out and the sisters are hard at it, groping, slicing, incising, wringing, twisting and punching. Good. It is all progress.

NOW. If what I say above is true, then here is my comment on what you printed from "The Red Detachment of Women," who seem to me to be mouthing a lot of old whole-swallowed junk: "Women are oppressed at the point of production." Balls. Only those women are so oppressed who participate in production (about 90% of American women, at one time or another in their lives do participate in social production according to US Labour statistics, so this sounds impressive). However, such participation is NOT women's MAIN oppression, but a secondary one: WHO when both partners in a marriage work stays home if the kid gets sick or the gas gets turned off, etc? So, during the main part of their lives when they are NOT at the point of production, are women still oppressed or not? And if so, how?

I very much fear that the answer is: "sexually." But this subject was for a LONG time absolutely tabu in the Left. It still is in such places as China and Korea; it still is in the so-called orthodox Left. None of them like you to mention sex. You will be condemned as "petite bourgeoise," accused of dragging in "inconsequential" issues, and of changing the subject from what THEY say is the MAIN oppression of women, namely the economic. Nonetheless, proof exists that they are quite wrong. For, when they made socialism in Russia, in China and Korea, etc., they formally made women equal to men by law; gave them equal pay for equal work, etc. Yet women are still oppressed in those countries. In an unexpected burst of candour, the Second Secretary of the North Korean Embassy in Accra, Ghana, told me one day in 1965 that, though his country had liberated itself, WOMEN were still oppressed there because, he said, they still had to carry almost the sole burden for the household. Later, this was glossed over in more formal discussions, which went on-quite fruitlessly-with the MALES of this advanced little Asian country.

The second thing I want to comment on is the reprint of Ellen Willis' excellent and thought-provoking article on women and consumerism... (She says) "For women, buying and wearing clothes and beauty aids is not so much consumption as work." What interests me is the sentence that reads, "Similarly, buying food and household furnishings is a domestic task; it is the wife's chore to pick out the commodities that will be consumed by the whole family." This is true, but I think we have to stress, bang, holler, its central MEANING. WHY is it "the wife's chore" to do precisely THESE things regarding precisely consumerism? Because this is THE focal point of the "wife's" existence; this is HOW she goes about producing labour power. It may be her chore to spend the money, but - as Ellen Willis notes - the DECISIONS regarding the spending of the husband's money (for that is what it is) rest with HIM. And that is because she performs her function of producing labour power in the patrilinear nucleus called "the home" as a SLAVE owned by the husband, whose name proclaims his ownership to the world.

The big point here is this: it is NOT clarifying to keep mouthing the phrase "Women are oppressed at the point of production" except as a prelude to demolishing it with facts, because it is a partial truth unrelated to the BASIC female truth, that women are oppressed and subjugated via the patrilinear family in a SEXUAL manner as economic SLAVES, and that this is their MAIN, not a secondary, occupation in the imperialist system. It is a KEY function within that system, for if ever that function could be massively disrupted, it would in turn massively disrupt the system. But women could ALL go out on strike from their jobs in industry and absolutely nothing would happen to the system except to alienate a few more women from each other and a few more men from us.

Perhaps nobody will agree with me. But ever since I fought my way through to these points, everything about woman's position in this society has made sense and been explicable. I want to share these ideas with as many women as possible, because every bit of self-knowledge is a step in the direction of ultimate, far-off Freedom for us. If we don't understand that we are literal slaves, we will have illusions about what constitutes freedom or how to attain same. If we don't see WHY we are slaves, namely to produce the commodity labour power for the ruling imperialist class at no expense to them - we won't know what freedom IS when we come to struggle for it.

I'll be interested in your comments.

Yours in sisterhood,

Hodee

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Rainham Essex RM13 8HX
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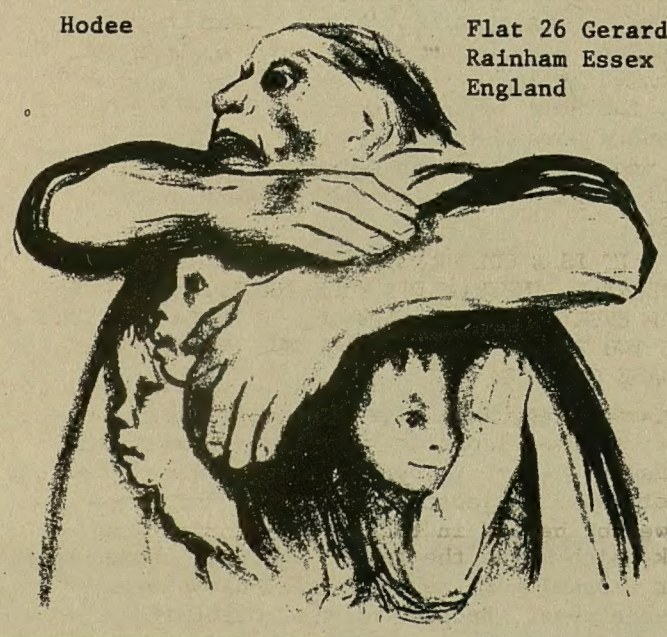


...He seems to be sure that it is his view that is the right one: ours vagaries, deviations. And if his view is the right one, God knows there is nothing to live for: not a greasy biscuit. And the egotism of men surprises and shocks me even now. Is there a woman of my acquaintance who could sit in my armchair from 3 to 6:30 without the semblance of a suspicion that I may be busy, or tired, or bored; and so sitting could talk, grumbling and grudging, of her difficulties, worries; then eat chocolates, then read a book, and go at last, apparently self-complacent and wrapped in a kind of blubber of misty self-salutation? Not the girls at Newham or Girton. They are far too spry; far too disciplined. None of that self confidence is their lot.

Virginia Woolf

...Fanon and the whole black liberation struggle have recently extended the dictionary definition of imperialism or colonialism to mean a group which is prevented from self determination by another group- whether it has a national territory or not. The psychological and cultural mutilation is particularly intense and the colonialism more brutal when the group that colonizes and the group colonized have different defining physical characteristics that set them clearly apart... Women, set apart by physical differences between them and men, were the first colonized group. And the territory colonized was and remains our women's bodies...Our bodies are free territory to other male colonizers when not "protected" by an individual male colonist. What is rape but an imperialist act upon the territory of our bodies.

There are two forms of the colonization of our bodies(territories) by males. Most males have an individual colonial relationship to an individual female and most males identify with and act on the group colonization of women...

4th world....

...Fanon shows that it is not enough for the colonizer to control the territory and subject the inhabitants of it to his rule. The colonizer must destroy the culture and self respect of the colonized ...Fanon says, in The Wretched of the Earth, that "Colonialism... turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it." p.210 He says the colonized (in his book speaking of blacks) "must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists."...

...History (of art, politics, literature, etc.) as related by males has engraved upon women's minds a male image of the world. Women Are Now In the Process of Having to Prove that a Female Culture Exists...

...We also hold that female and male culture began with the definition of females as embodying all those human attributes which males as dominators could not reconcile with their own self-image and therefore projected onto females -thus causing a schizophrenic split of personality into masculine and feminine. That women, defined by these attributes, (such as emotional, intuitive, etc.) by males and further limited by their physical position in society as to work and tools, developed a female or "feminine" culture -and a culture of resistance to male domination. Although the concept of the "feminine" was imposed upon women, we have, through the centuries, developed and created within the confines of the feminine, a female culture...

(Differences in habits, customs and language)...they are the superficials that cover up the fundamental similarity of all national cultures the world over. This fundamental similarity is the split between male culture and female culture...The problem is that the split is so obvious and taken for granted that practically nobody can see it...Let us again take up those things(habits, skills, art, concepts and institutions) which distinguish one culture from another according to Webster's definition. Part of the customs of a culture are its habits...It is clear that women and men have very different daily habits. Women -in most all parts of the world- whether they are working outside the home or not- have responsibility for the cooking, cleaning and child-"raising" chores of the society. This means that most women spend their time with children. This in itself is a cultural split as men go out of the home and mix mainly with other males in the male world ouside the home. Generally males do not do any of the work designated as "female work". Women, mainly in the company of other women and children, organize their time and routines and socializing on an entirely different basis than males. Female work- being so completely caste labor- is organized and done by women in ways peculiar to the female view of things(which is very much determined by women's secluded work place i.e. the home and its environs). The whole daily routine of a man and a woman is totally different...

...Most males cannot understand what is going on in female culture - art. The worth of female art is thoroughly suppressed in a male dominated society.

A FEMALE CULTURE EXISTS. IT IS A CULTURE THAT IS SUBORDINATED AND UNDER MALE CULTURES'S COLONIAL, IMPERIALIST RULE ALL OVER THE WORLD. UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE OF EVERY NATIONAL, ETHNIC, OR RACIAL CULTURE IS THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE TWO PRIMARY CULTURES OF THE WORLD - THE FEMALE CULTURE AND THE MALE CULTURE.

The female soul, suppressed and most often stereotyped in male art, is defined by negative comparisons to the male. The eternal feminine is seen as a passive, earth to be molded and formed, mysterious, unthinking, emotional, subjective,etc....The fact that women live under the power of belief in these characterizations causes a certain outlook which molds the female culture. Woman's position in society, her economic and psychological dependence, reinforce the female stereotypes. Because of the belief in these attributes and woman's position in society, not because of our inherent "female nature", women's concepts of the world are much different from men's...

a woman?

march 12, 1971

Speaks

...Though it appears that both men and women live together within the institutions of a society, men really define and control the institutions while women live under their rule. The gov't, army, religion, economy and family are institutions of the male culture colonial rule of the female...Crossing national boundaries often awakens a women's understanding of her position in society...It is everywhere - there is no place to escape...Most males all over the world perceive and compare females as a caste group all over the world...The repression of female culture is only a question of degree all over the world -the underlying reality is basically the same -the denial of self-determination for women...But it too often happens that women falsely identify with "their" country's dominant male culture and so cannot communicate with their sisters in subjection in other lands or in other races. This female identification with male cultural supremacy must be overcome if the Women's Movement is to be a truly liberating force...

..."NATIONAL" Culture is the Dominant Male Culture...

One national culture vs. another national culture is simply one male dominated society vs. another male dominated society with women carried along or used outside their subservient role temporarily if this is necessary for victory of the male national culture...

..."Our" own male dominators always want us only to resist the other males' domination in the guise of the destruction of "our common culture" - which they have always excluded us from and subordinated us to...

...For example, Fanon, in the chapter "Algeria Unveiled" in A Dying Colonialism, makes this "mistake" and exposes his own identification with male cultural supremacy. Fanon takes the veil as the symbol of Arab and Algerian culture. "The veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society". p.35 And he says "The way people clothe themselves, together with the tradition of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness..." p.35

Now the veil can be seen as a distinctly Arab cultural trait - or national cultural trait. We have shown that the national culture has a unified way of defining and limiting the female through the veil. The female cultural suppression is symbolically represented by the veil which must be worn by pubertal females on up.

Fanon is correct in saying that the French tried to destroy Algerian (male) culture and that this is a typical colonial tactic of one male culture vs. another colonized male culture. But Fanon shows a typical male inability to see the brutal colonization of females by males...

...Fanon reveals the hypocrisy of the male Third World when he mocks the "allegations" made that the Algerian female is oppressed. His defense of Algerian male culture is every bit as smooth as the French justification of colonial rule. And he denies female oppression under *the guise of defending the Algerian national culture* from vulture-like attacks by the French. *No one will doubt that the* French were brutal colonizers of the Algerians but that does not either deny or excuse the equally brutal colonization of Algerian females by Algerian males...

...Never once does Fanon see the Algerian woman simply as a pawn of both the French male supremacist culture and the Algerian males - neither of whom were interested in her humanity. What he does instead is to deny her oppression and then to sympathize with Algerian male colonists who used her oppression as a symbol of their manhood and Algerian culture...

...We use the example of Algeria only to show that a nationalist, anti-imperialist revolution does not free women because the dominant male culture is identified as the national culture and male supremacy is never attacked.

Women have always been used and abused in male revolutions because the male revolutionists are colonialist imperialists in relation to females. It's as if the Algerians fighting with the French in WWII expected the French to liberate Algeria. The French didn't want to be dominated by another country but they wanted to continue their own domination of Algeria. Males don't want to be dominated by other males or another male culture but they have no intention of discontinuing their domination of the female culture.

Fadela M'Rabet, an Algerian woman, a few years after Algeria won it's independence, wrote a book entitled La Femme Algerienne (published by Maspero). In it she charged that the women who fought in the Resistance were used in the Algerian nationalist revolution only to be returned to their former subservience after "independence" was gained. She said that not very many women participated in the struggle and their lives were never affected in any way. . . She says, "In order to understand the situation of the woman (and her reactions) it is necessary to start with the man; if she submits or revolts, if she accepts her condition or does not, the Algerian woman has evolved in a world which is made by men, for men, and at his advantage only. The Constitution, without doubt, and the resolutions of the Congress proclaim the equality of all citizens; but the gap is such between the texts and the facts that all is as if the texts did not exist."

Claudine, in an interview in a New York Times magazine (Oct., 1967) article after Algerian independence was won, said that she was lucky that her father allowed her to go to school and not to wear the veil. (Most Algerian girls get no schooling - even after the revolution - because as Fadela M'Rabet said, too much schooling for a girl is considered very dangerous by the male society.)

Fadela M'Rabet argues eloquently for a female revolution now. "Must we wait several generations under the pretext that our society is not 'ready'? We (Algeria) are the product of 300 years of colonialism. But how many centuries of exploitation have women lived under: Their colonizers have been the men."

THE FOURTH WORLD MANIFESTO IS A 32 PAGE PAMPHLET WHICH CAN BE ORDERED FROM: WOMEN - FOURTH WORLD, 741 W. BETHUNE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48202. 50¢ EA. - FOR ORDERS OF 100 OR MORE 35¢ EA.

SISTERS SMASH SEXISM, TECHNOCRACY & PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE

Good Words

A phillips screw has a cris-cross groove; you need a special screwdriver with a pointy end to remove them. Phillips screwdrivers are cheap + you can get one at a hardware store.

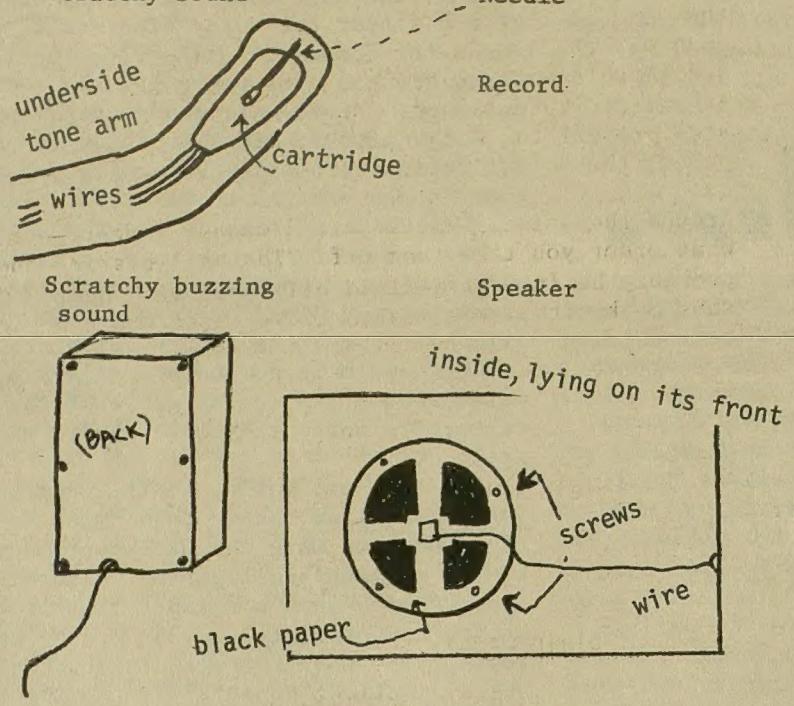
These notes are from experience + watching + asking questions. They apply to "portable" under $100-type record players, not component sets like KLH, Garrard, Sony, etc. Those seem to have different problems than cheap sets like I have.

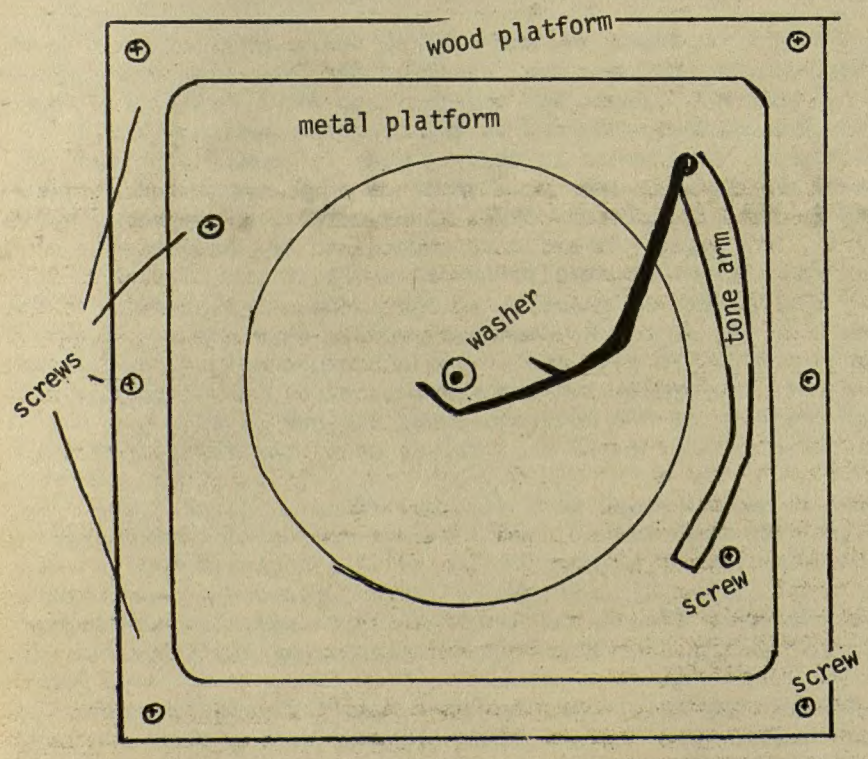
Portable stereos are made to wear out + fuck up + be hard to take apart. I keep remembering how electronics is a very male thing — all those screws + sockets....

The repairs listed here are mostly mechanical + you don't have to understand much electronic shit (I don't) You learn it by doing it....

HOW TO FIX CHEAP STEREOS

TROUBLE	WHERE / WHAT PART	TRY DOING THIS:
Scratchy sound	Needle	Buy a new needle. Don't be pressured into buying a whole cartridge if it's just the needle that's bad.
	Record	Dust records with lightly damp un-linty cloth. Much-used records: Wash them (really!) in lukewarm water and very 1 little soap with cloth or un-scratchy sponge.
Scratchy buzzing sound	Speaker	Speakers are made of paper and they can be punctured or torn. You can tape the tear with thin, preferably paper, tape. Scotch Magic tape is OK; best is thin paper or plastic tape which you rip off at a hospital. Take the back of the speaker off: some have regular screws; some you need a phillips screwdriver; some have hexanuts so you need pliers. Usually 2 or 4 screws hold the speaker to the box; take it off & turn over & look for holes in the black paper to tape up. Put back together & make sure everything is tight or you will hear unpleasant vibration of loose parts.
Only one speaker working	Wires	Check wires in speaker and into amplifier; you may have to have them soldered if they've broken off, but tape could do. Tighten parts of plug with pliers.
	connection plug →	
	cartridge	If the cartridge is bummed out, there is static, or very low volume on either or both speakers. You have to get a new one. Look under the arm & get the numbers on the cartridge.
Static or hum	power supply	Unplug the stereo and reverse the plug, like put it back in upside down. Or unplug another appliance in the room. Heating appliances especially can interfere.
Skipping	Turntable	See if the turntable is level; if it isn't then prop up one corner by sticking a matchbook under it. Try each corner. It could be that the tone arm is too light. Tape a weight on top, like a dime or a penny --it should be right above the needle.
Too fast	Turntable: speed switch	See that the switch is exactly on 33 1/3 or whatever. It should click into place.
Too slow and/or Whirring sound and/or squeaking at regular intervals	Turntable inside	Turntable needs cleaning and new lubrication. This is a big deal. Do not stop, do not pass go, continue to "Taking apart the turntable"



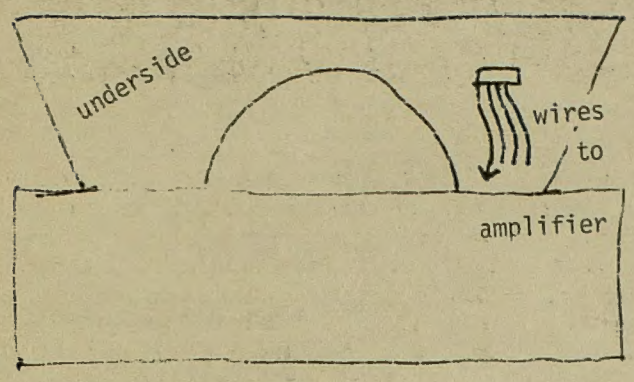


TAKING APART THE TURNTABLE

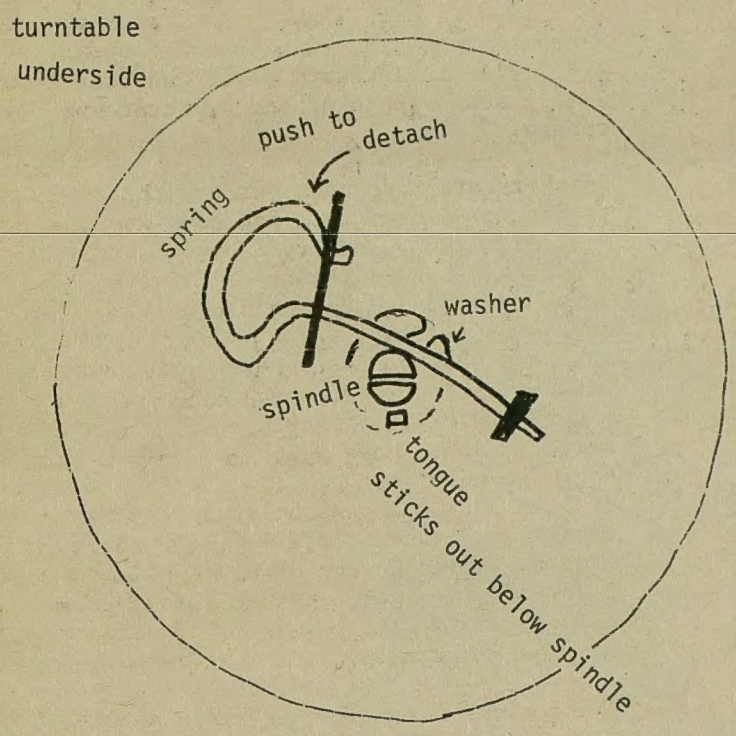
Tools: you need small pliers, screwdrivers with short handles, (one regular , one Phillips-type), rags, and some very light machine oil --jewelers' oil is best, but 3-in-1 oil will do. Time: allow yourself at least 1½ hours. And take notes as you work; lay down parts on a piece of paper and label them or trace around them. Things have to go back together in order.

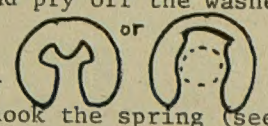
The metal platform "floats" on springs over a base of wood or fibreboard . There are usually 2 phillips screws kitty-corner from each other. Loosen them and the metal and wood platforms will come together. If there is no wood base, find a hole near one of the 2 screws(there should be one on the right side) reach in & find an anchor holding the screw, horizontally. Snap the anchor up vertically& push the side of the turntable up. Also press the tone arm down on its armrest so it won't dangle.

If there is a wood base, there are 4, 6 or 8 screws, usually phillips, holding the base to the cabinet. Remove these and pry a little at the wood edge & slowly lift the whole platform up about 5 inches. Be careful. There are wires from the amplifier to the turntable which are soldered and it's a hassle if you break the connection on either end. Determine how far you can lift without straining the wires, and prop up the platform at that point with a piece of wood or something.

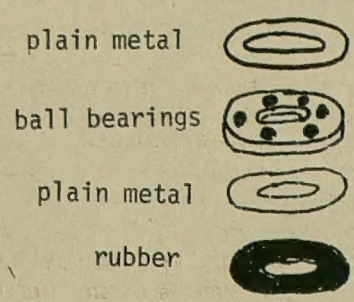


A set of 4 tiny wires may be taped to the metal platform or, where they come together, attached with a screw; you can remove the screw or tape for more mobility.



Turn to the top of the turntable and pry off the washer around the spindle that looks like this  or Then turn to the under side again and there's another similar washer around the spindle end. First unhook the spring (see diagram) then pry off the washer (with the regular screwdriver). At that point, the spindle should come out. Keep the spindle together.

Around the spindle socket are 4 washer-ring-things. Note in what order you take them off. The ball bearing one will probably be full of jellied oil mixed with dust. Clean out this gunk with a rag, matchsticks, etc: you can use carbon ~~tetrachloride here; just don't scratch the bearings~~. Then relubricate the rings with jewelers' oil --not a whole lot -- as you put it back together.

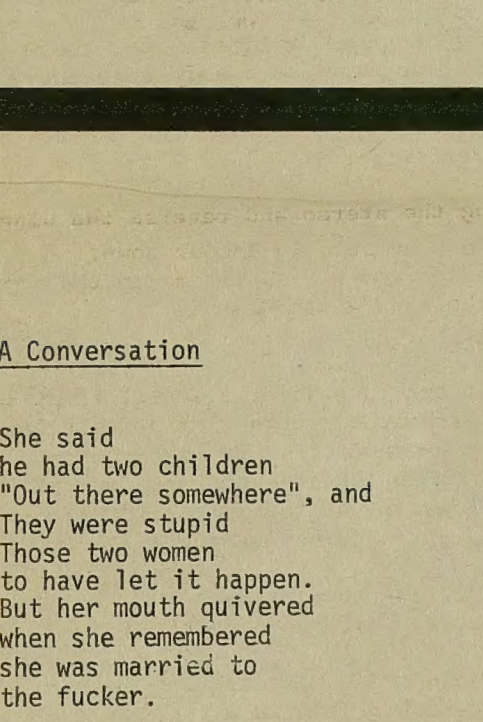


If the turntable is still slow, it may mean the motor is wearing out. That is a bummer. Unless you have a contact for little electric motors, replacing that is not worth it; you might as well well spend it on a new stereo; you might also find a bargain by calling repair shops about stereos left for repairs and abandoned.

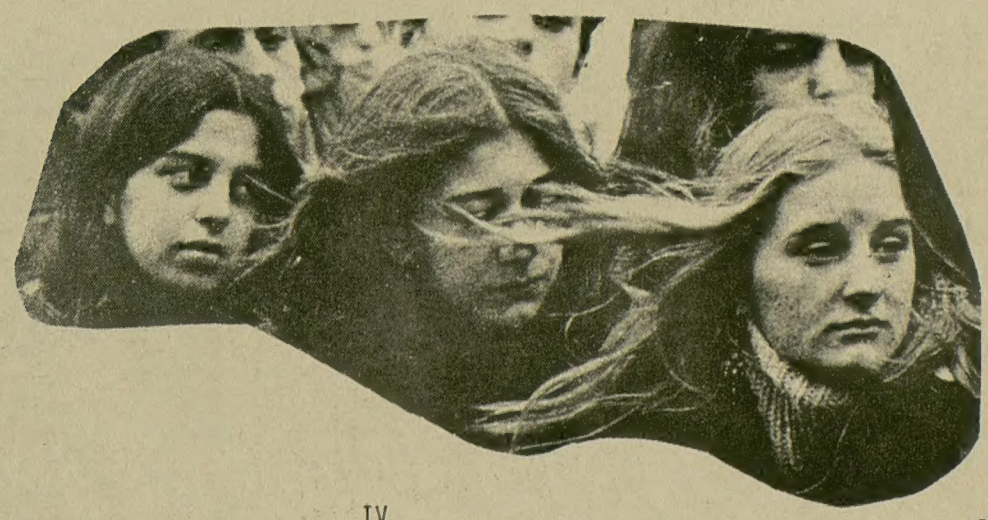
A Conversation

I
She said
he had two children
"Out there somewhere", and
They were stupid
Those two women
to have let it happen.
But her mouth quivered
when she remembered
she was married to
the fucker.

II
You did not take it well.
Head bowed.
Searching
the years between your legs
for the afterbirth of
two children decided against.

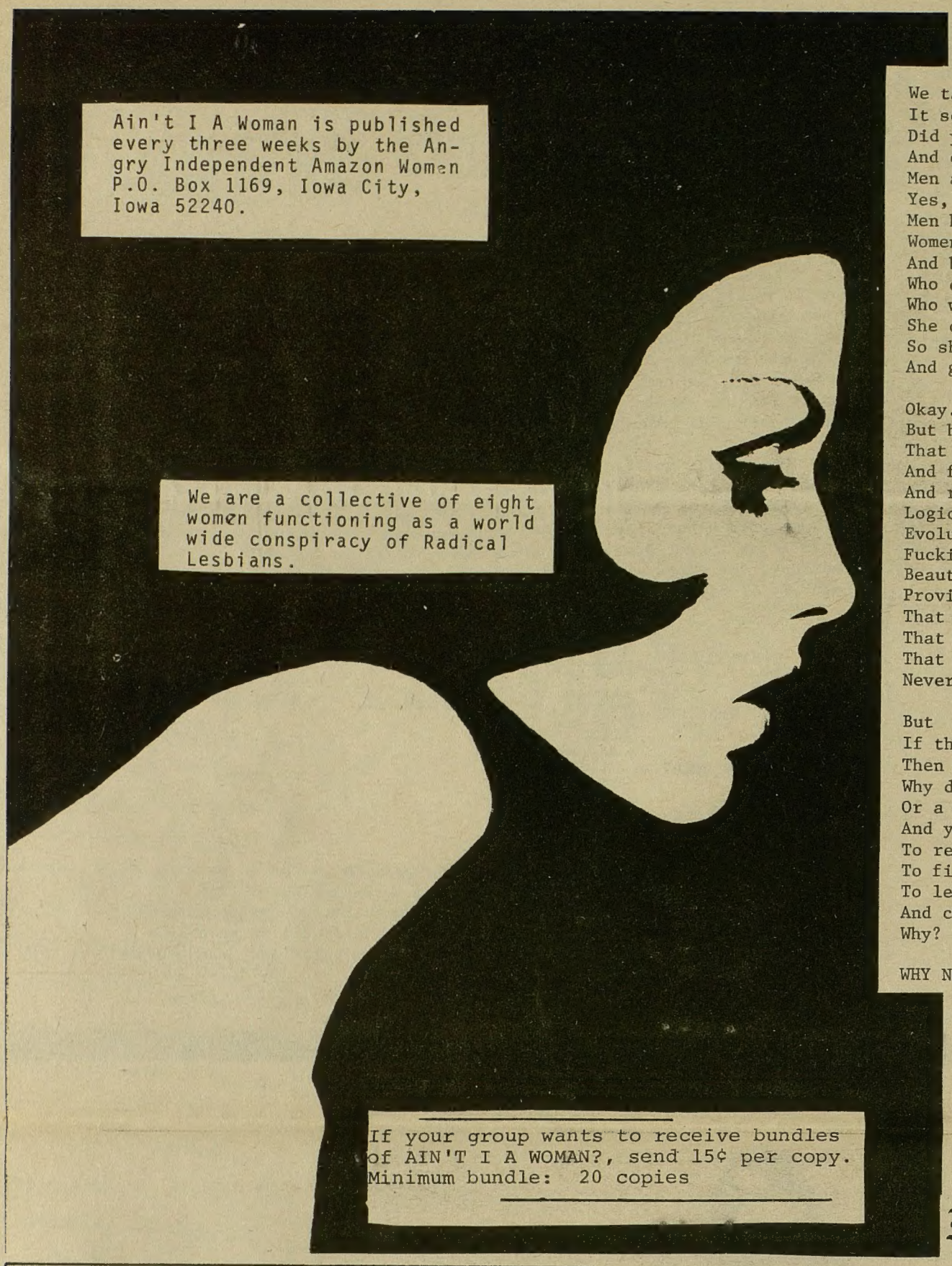


III
I watched
from the fortunate place
you have given me.
An outsider--
As when I pressed my nose
against the panes of my childhood,
Wishing I wanted
what you have and now relinquish.
My womanhood denied:
Minus-woman.
Lesbian.



IV
So. You mistake my independence for privilege
forgetting the years I've struggled
to even like myself
for the woman I am.

And it's not that I mind
being seen by you as different.
Only concerned,
My married friend,
My lover,
that you realize
Our distance is yours to diminish.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We talked about men and women today.
It seems there's a new theory out.
Did you know Man's a million years old?
And during those million years
Men and women developed differently.
Yes, they did.
Men hunted.
Women had babies.
And because woman had babies
Who couldn't cling,
Who were helpless and dependent for a long time,
She couldn't hunt with the men.
So she stayed home and made a nest
And gathered food to bring to it.

Okay. Maybe so.
But he says that women have evolved in this pattern.
That we are genetically set up to stay home
And feather a nest
And raise young.
Logic, reason,
Evolution, biology,
Fucking up my mind.
Beautiful masculine progession
Proving beyond a shadow of a doubt
That women are "different".
That women are "nurturant".
That women are "gatherers".
Never argue with a biologist.

But
If this is so,
Then why is my soul screaming, "no, no, no!"
Why do I look at the stars at night,
Or a distant mountain top
And yearn to fly;
To reach, struggle, climb;
To find my place in the universe;
To leave the nest far behind
And carve out a stairway to infinity--
Why?

WHY NOT!

a loving THANK YOU
to the
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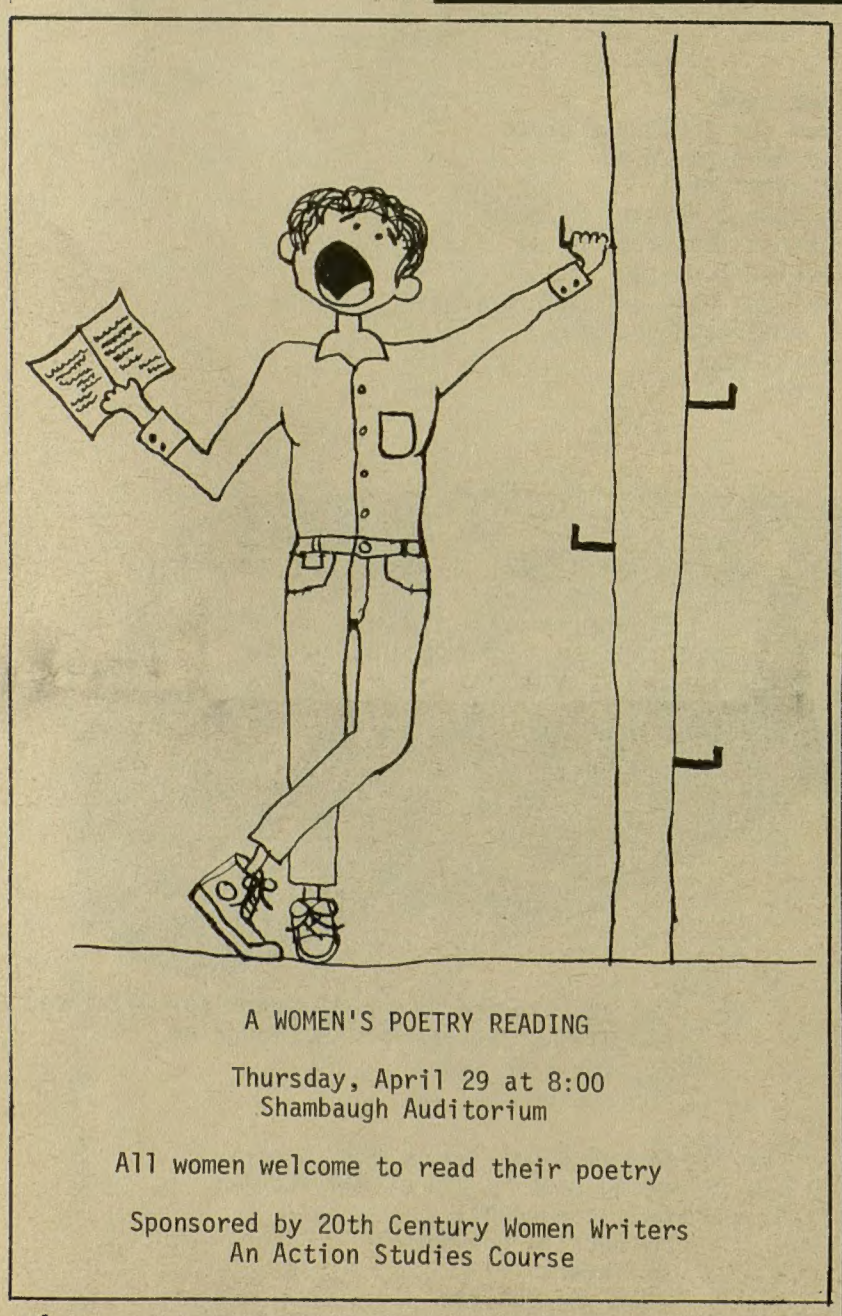
FREEDOM FIGHTERS



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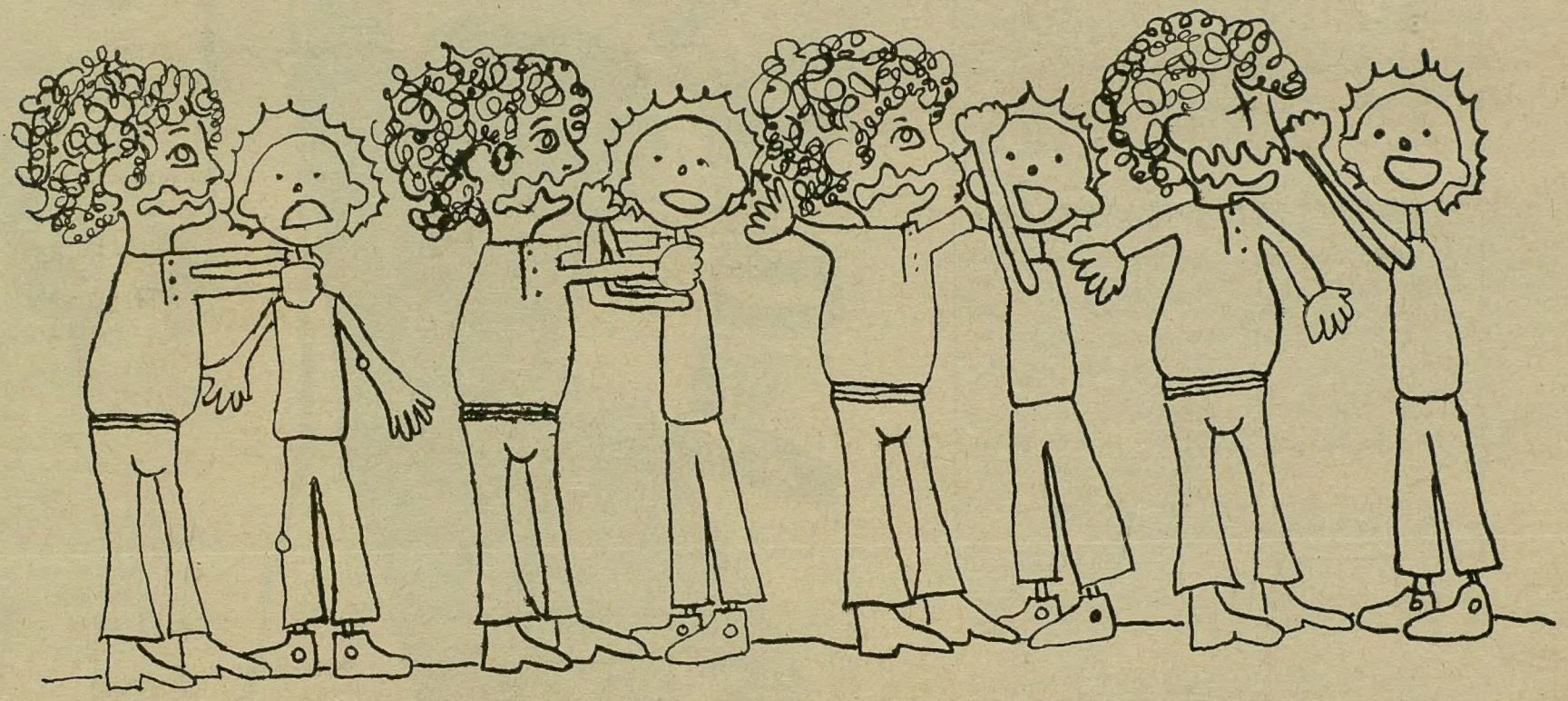

If someone grabs you around the neck, don't vainly try to pull his arms away or pry his fingers loose. The strength of his arms & hands is greater than the strength of your forearms.

Instead use the strong muscles in your shoulders. Make a fist of one hand and cup it in the other. This is so that when you bring your hands down on his nose, you won't break your fingers.

Keeping your elbows close together, force first your forearms & then your upper arms & shoulders upward between his arms. Keeping your elbows together is important because flapping your arms is useless. It is the strength of your shoulders that will break the hold.

After you are able to breathe, bring your cupped hands down on his nose so he will discover what it's like not to be able to.